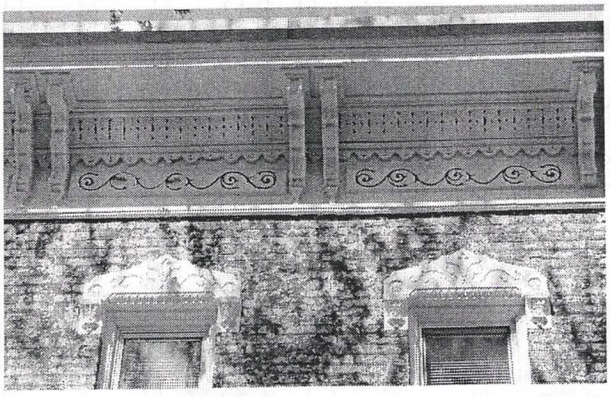
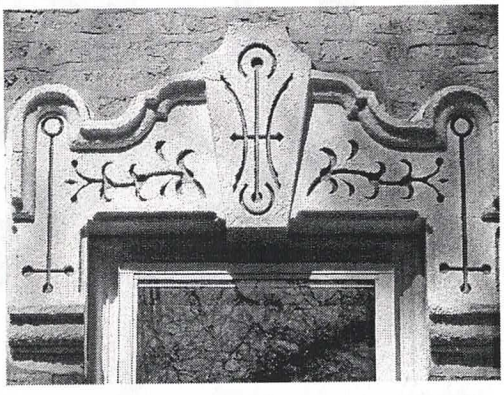
LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT





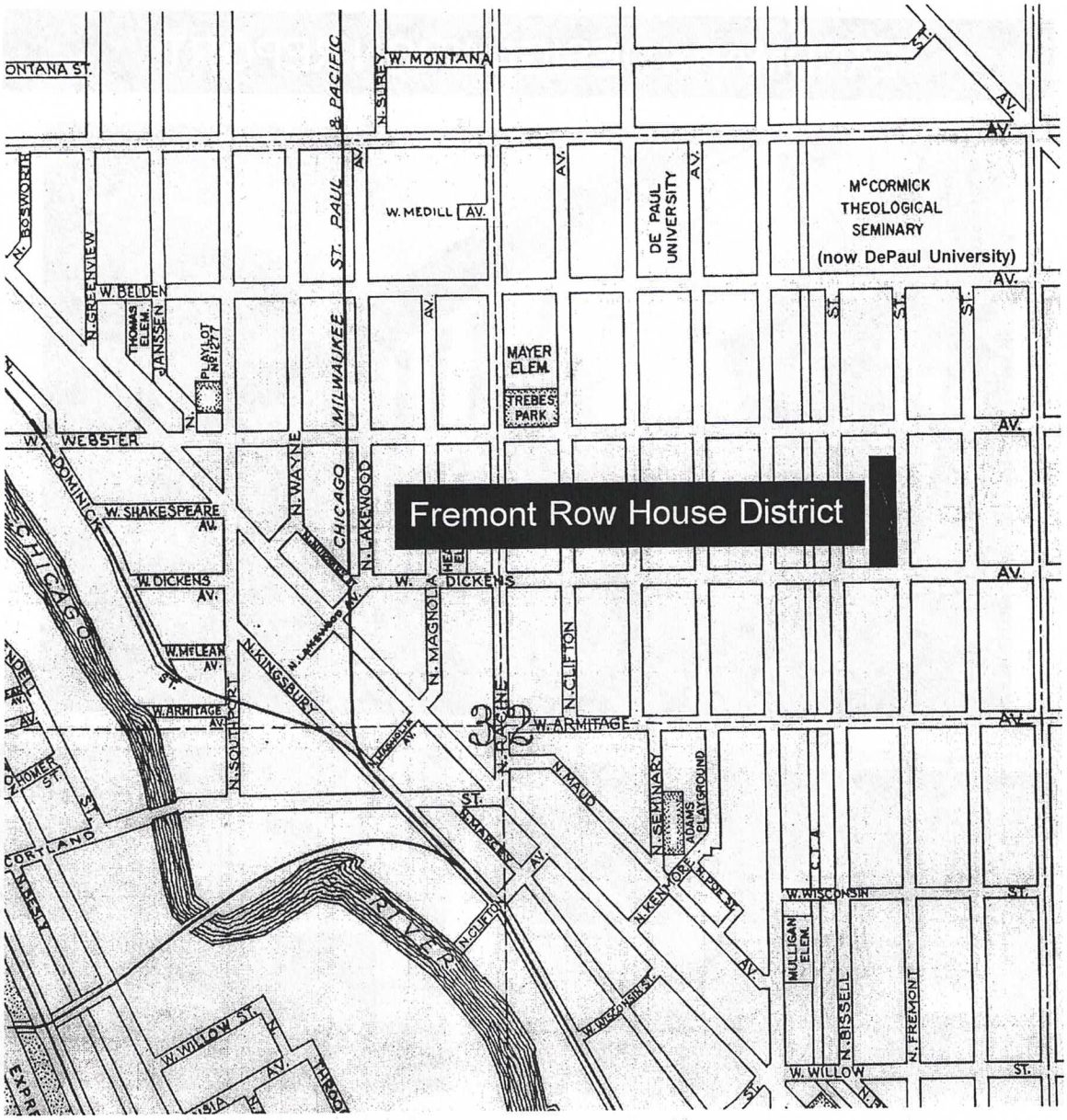
Fremont Row House District

2100 - 2144 N. Fremont St.

Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, June 5, 2003

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Alicia Mazur Berg, Commissioner



Above: The Fremont Row House District is located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood just south of the DePaul University campus.

Cover: The district consists of 20 brick Italianate-style row houses ornamented with a continuous wooden cornice and cast-stone lintels.

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

Fremont Row House District

2100-44 N. Fremont St.

Date: 1875
Architect: Edward J. Burling

The Fremont Row House District—twenty brick row houses on the 2100-block of North Fremont Street—forms a rare grouping of attached single-family residences from the 1870s. It is an excellent example of the high-quality building construction in Chicago during the decade following the Fire of 1871.

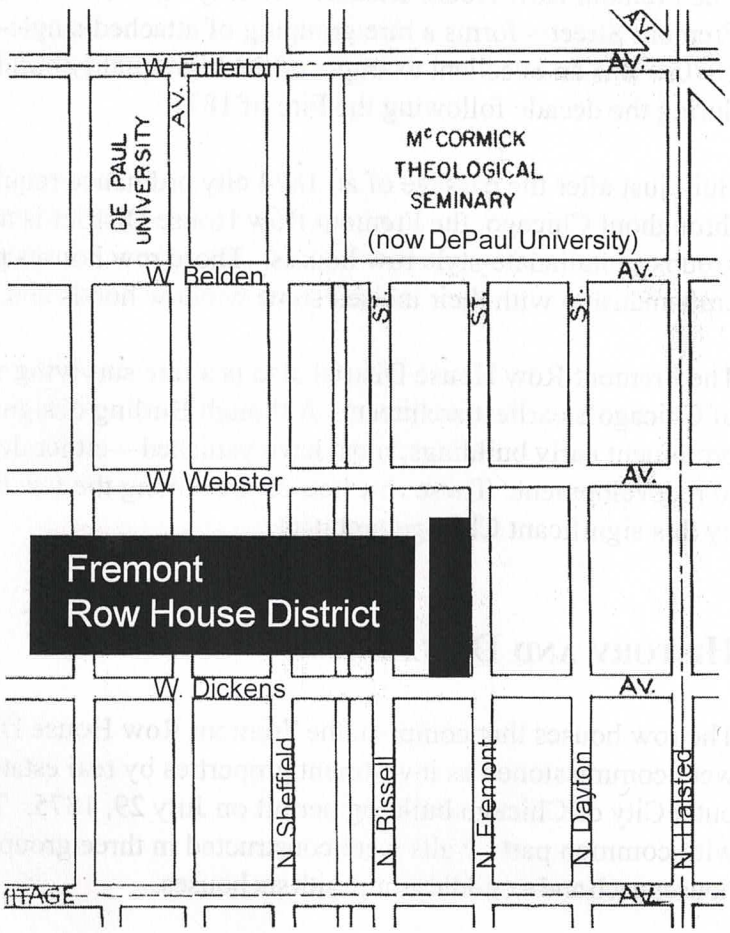
Built just after the passage of an 1874 city ordinance requiring brick construction throughout Chicago, the Fremont Row House District is among the city's best remaining groups of Italianate-style row houses. These row houses possess excellent detailing and craftsmanship with their incised stone window hoods and set of rare wood cornices.

The Fremont Row House District also is a rare surviving work of Edward J. Burling, one of Chicago's earliest architects. Although Burling designed many of Chicago's most prominent early buildings, most have vanished—either destroyed in the 1871 fire or lost to redevelopment. These row houses are among the few buildings still standing designed by this significant Chicago architect.

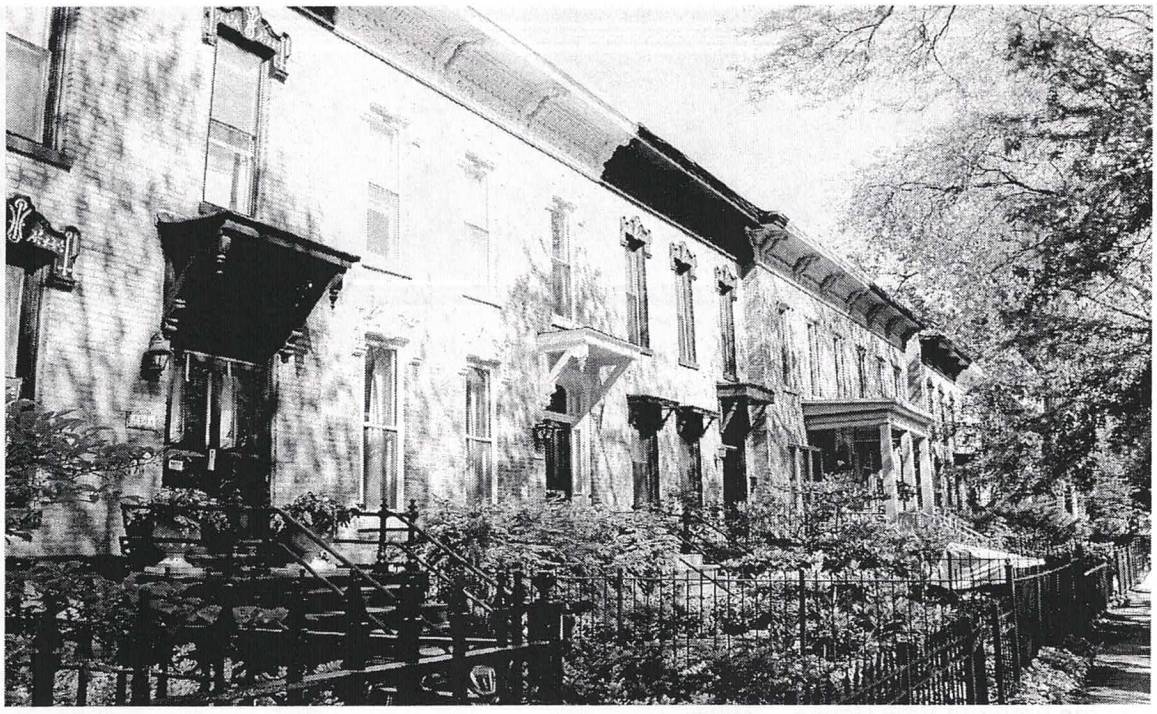
History and Description

The row houses that comprise the Fremont Row House District were built in 1875. They were commissioned as investment properties by real estate agent J. H. Hubbard, who took out a City of Chicago building permit on July 29, 1875. Twenty attached brick houses with common party walls were constructed in three groups, two end groups with seven houses each and a middle group with six houses.

Visually dominating the Fremont streetscape, the row houses were conceived as one unified design. All are two stories in height, set on raised basements. Common setbacks create a distinct sense of visual unity and symmetry. In each group, the innermost houses (two for the middle group and three for the two end groups) are set slightly back, creating a subtle "in-and-out" rhythm through the district. Walls are built of pinkish-brown common brick. Similarly placed building entrances, set to one side of each row house, create a consistent visual rhythm. Each row house originally had simple stoops with cast-iron railings and wooden "pent" roofs supported by brackets. Several of the district's row houses have had early replacement porches, some with later Eastlake-style wooden spindlework, others with Classical-style roofs and columns. Double-hung windows are ornamented with dramatic Italianate-style cast-stone window hoods ornamented with fine incising. Doorways are slightly recessed beneath curved transom window openings. Elaborate Italianate-style wooden cornices, ornamented with paired brackets, scallops and incising, run across the rooflines of the three groups of row houses. In addition, the row house at 2100 N. Fremont has a two-story coach house facing Dickens, built in 1893, with a finished brick facade trimmed with stone, terra cotta, and brick corbeling. (The garage's first-floor facade has been modified with a modern garage door set within newer brickwork.)

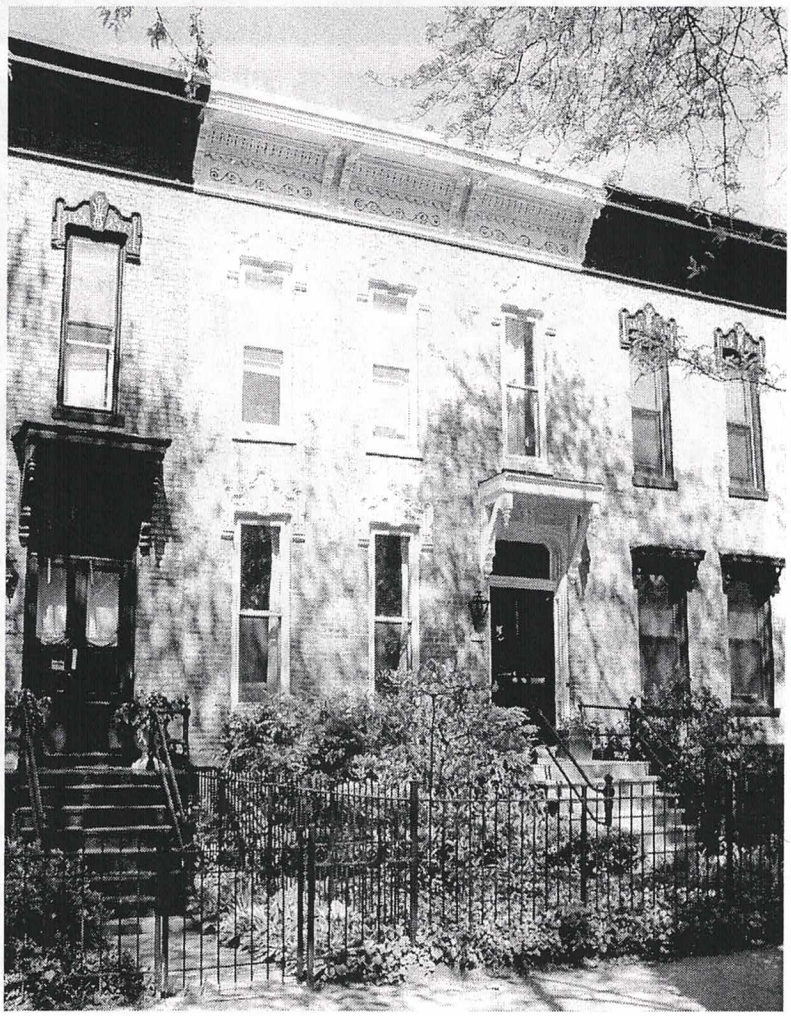


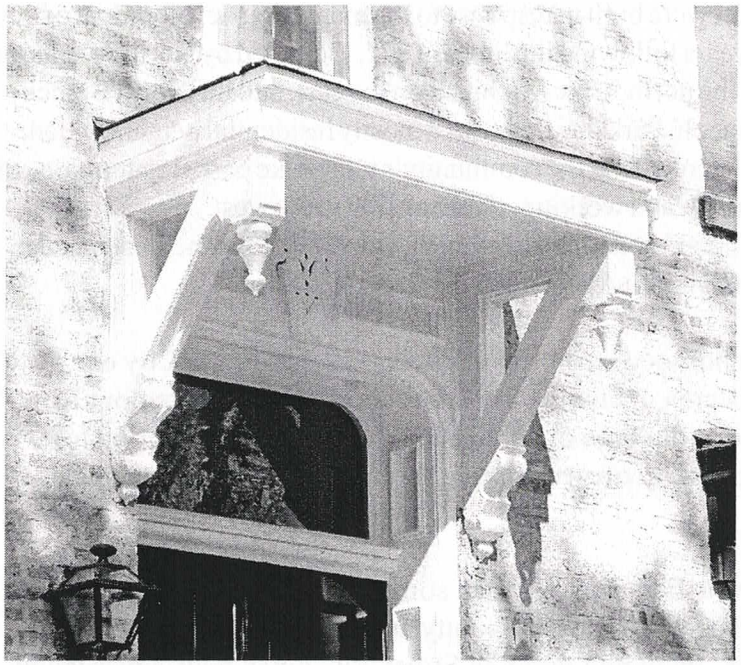
The Fremont Row House District is located in the western part of the Lincoln Park community area commonly known as the Sheffield neighborhood. It consists of 20 row houses on the west side of N. Fremont St. between Dickens and Webster Aves.



The rowhouses in the Fremont Row House District create a unified streetscape with their regular setbacks, two-story facades, Italianate-style window ornament, and rare surviving wood cornices. Top: A view of the district looking north from 2104 N. Fremont Ave. Above: Looking south from 2136 S. Fremont Ave.

The individual row houses in the Fremont Row House District were designed in the Italianate style. Right: 2106 N. Fremont retains most original details, including a simple front stoop with cast-iron railings, a wooden "pent" roof" over a double front door, cast-stone window lintels, and wooden cornice. Above: Window lintels have prominent keystones and incising while the cornice combines paired brackets with carved dentils and scalloping.





Above: The entrance to 2106 N. Fremont has a wooden pent roof with carved wood brackets. Left: 2106 has a front stoop with wooden steps and cast-iron railings leading to a wooden double door set within a round-arched frame with transom.

The row houses on Fremont Street were built in response to the increasing development of the Lincoln Park community in the years following the Fire of 1871. Bounded by North Avenue on the south, Diversey Parkway on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, and the North Branch of the Chicago River to the west, Lincoln Park developed as a mostly residential neighborhood, with upper-class housing along Lincoln Park, the community's namesake park situated along the shore of Lake Michigan, and middle- and working-class housing to the west. A swath of factories, an important source of neighborhood employment, was built along the western edge of the community area, between Clybourn Avenue and the river.

Most of the Lincoln Park neighborhood north to Fullerton, was part of the City of Chicago by 1853. Much of this area, including the future location of the Fremont Row House District, was first platted at the time of annexation as Sheffield's Addition to Chicago, named for a leading property owner, Joseph Sheffield, who ran a local plant nursery.

Development in Lincoln Park was first stymied, then stimulated, when the Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed the eastern portion of the community area. As reconstruction began, the western half of Lincoln Park, including Fremont Street, saw much new construction. Untouched by the Fire, this area had remained largely undeveloped, with major property owners including Sheffield and the McCormick Theological Seminary, which had relocated in 1863 to then-rural property at Fullerton Avenue and Halsted from its previous home in Indiana. In the wake of the Fire, as new construction occurred to replace lost housing, this western portion of Lincoln Park began to see the construction of cottages, row houses, and small flat buildings along residential streets such as Fremont while commercial buildings were built along arterial streets such as Armitage and Halsted. As with most of Lincoln Park, the neighborhood developed as a predominantly German area, although a small Irish-American enclave developed near the parish of St. Vincent de Paul, newly established at Sheffield and Webster Avenues in 1875 (the same year of the Fremont Row House District's construction two blocks to the east).

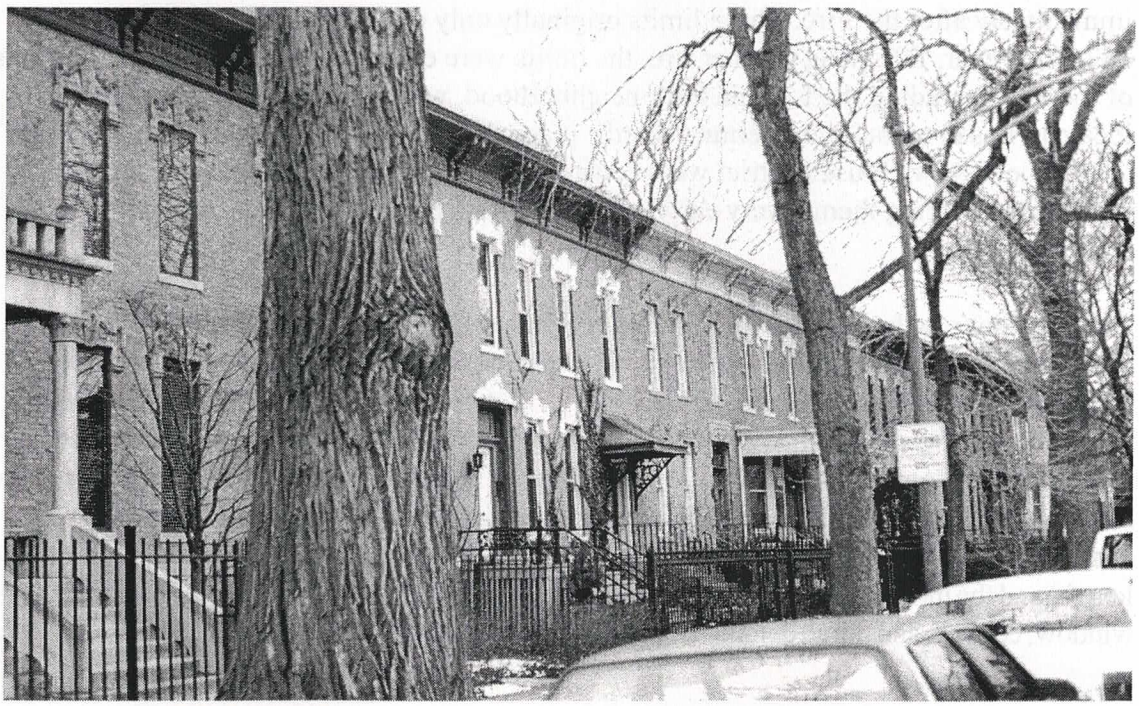
The Fremont Row House District has been widely recognized in several publications for its architectural quality. The *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* rated the row house group as "orange," or "significant to the community." The row houses were also cited in the *AIA Guide to Chicago.* In addition, they were noted as "structures of special distinction" in the nomination form for the Sheffield Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Chicago Row House Design and Construction

The Fremont Row House District is a fine example of the high-quality residential row houses constructed in Chicago's neighborhoods as the city rebuilt and expanded following the Fire of 1871. The district represents one of the earliest surviving groups of brick row houses built in Chicago following an 1874 city ordinance that required "fireproof" masonry

Row houses were built in Chicago as early as the 1860s. Left: Park Row, located east of Michigan Avenue at today's Roosevelt Road (demolished), was a significant early example of the building type.

The 1870s saw increased construction of row houses as in the aftermath of the Fire of 1871 as Chicago's population increased dramatically in outlying neighborhoods. Middle: Aldine Square, a row house development next to a private park (demolished), was built in Chicago's Douglas community area on the South Side. Bottom: A significant early example of row house development that survives in Chicago is the Burling Row House District in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, built in 1875 and designed by Edward J. Burling, the architect of the Fremont Row House District.



construction in most of the city's neighborhoods. As such, these row houses constitute a rare, surviving group of "first-generation" row houses in Chicago, which were built in response to increasing land costs in many neighborhoods following the 1871 Fire.

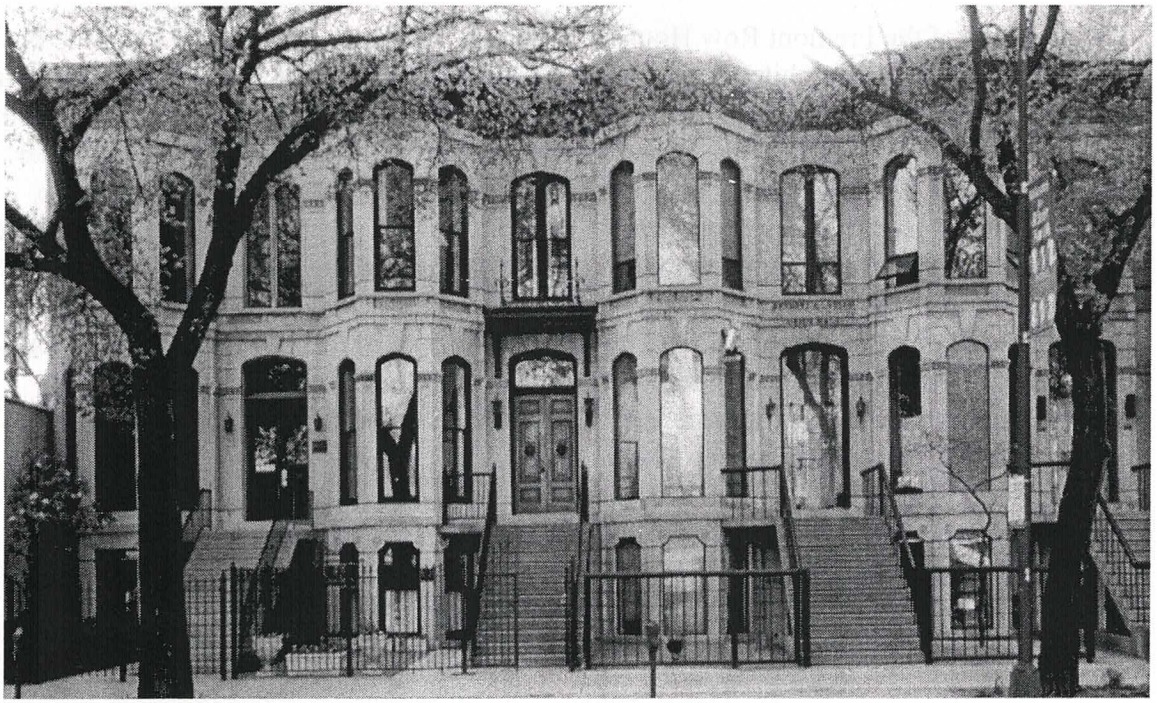
Early in the City's history, most Chicagoans lived in free-standing houses. In fact, Chicago's motto, "Urbs in Horto," translated as "The City in a Garden," refers to the early settlement's pattern of development of free-standing houses set amidst private gardens.

As early as the 1860s, however, a few "row houses," or groups of adjacent houses built with common "party walls" and usually with a unified design, were built in or near downtown Chicago where property values encouraged more intensive use of land. One prominent group of these row houses was located on Park Row, just east of Michigan Avenue at approximately the location of Roosevelt Road today. Row houses such as these began to give Chicago a more urban character, similar to that of more established Eastern cities such as Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Almost all of these earliest row houses were destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871 or lost subsequently to redevelopment.

As the City rebuilt and land values increased in the aftermath of the Fire, real estate investors subdivided ever-larger sections of land into residential lots usually 20 to 25 feet in width. In order to maximize the use of ever-more expensive land, architects began to alter their designs from the free-standing dwellings of the pre-Fire era to more compact, though often equally elaborate, row houses.

In addition, stricter fire codes went into effect that eliminated wooden structures within a "fire limits" boundary that was established around the central business district immediately after the Fire. These limits originally only extended to North Avenue. In 1874, however, following another fire, the limits were extended to include larger portions of the city, including the Lincoln Park neighborhood, where the Fremont row houses are located. Based on building permit records, it appears that the row houses that comprise the Fremont Row House District were constructed very soon after this new ordinance took effect, making them a very early example of this type of fireproof, masonry buildings.

The Fremont row houses are fine examples of the attached residences built in Chicago during the 1870s. Built in the Italianate style, the two-story row houses were set atop raised basements and given uniform setbacks. Flat common-brick walls were pierced with tall, narrow, double-hung windows ornamented with prominently-profiled, cast-stone lintels. Continuous wood cornices with paneling and carved brackets run along the row houses' rooflines. The overall simplicity and uniformity of the row houses, combined with the large scale of the three groups (extending almost one city block in length) and the intimate scale of the row houses' cast-stone and wood ornament, including window, cornice, and porch details, gives the district a distinct visual drama.



Surviving groups of Italianate-style row houses such as the Fremont Row House District are rare in Chicago. A significant remaining group is located on Chicago's Near North Side in the Chicago Landmark Washington Square District Extension, including (top) those at 827-33 N. Dearborn St. and (above) those at 802-08 N. Dearborn St.

The Italianate style was based on the picturesque architecture of Italian villas. The early 19th-century American architect Andrew Jackson Downing helped popularize the style during the 1840s and 1850s with the publication of influential pattern books that included Italianate-style country and suburban houses. Its original use in Chicago was for large, free-standing mansions such as the Charles Hull House on S. Halsted St., built in 1856 and best known for its later associations with the social work of Jane Addams. The style's prominent features included broadly projecting roof overhangs, elaborately carved brackets, and window and door openings topped by ornate lintels and hoods.

Its easy adaptability in terms of materials and detailing made the Italianate a nearly national style by the Civil War era and it remained popular in Chicago into the 1880s. Its features can be found on hundreds of the city's residential and commercial buildings. However, relatively few examples of the style as it was used for row houses have survived. The Fremont Row House District is one of the largest and most intact groupings of Italianate-style row houses in Chicago. Other significant groups of Italianate-style row houses include those in two Chicago Landmark Districts—the ten brick row houses that comprise the nearby Burling Row House District at 2225-45 N. Burling St. (1875, Edward J. Burling, architect) and brick and stone-clad row houses along Dearborn and Chestnut Streets in the Washington Square District Extension.

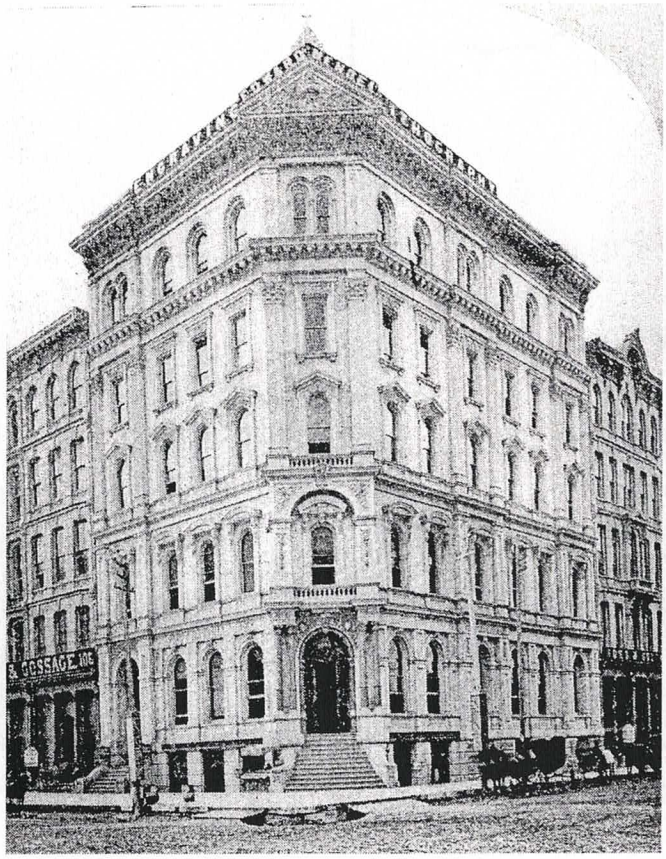
Architect Edward J. Burling

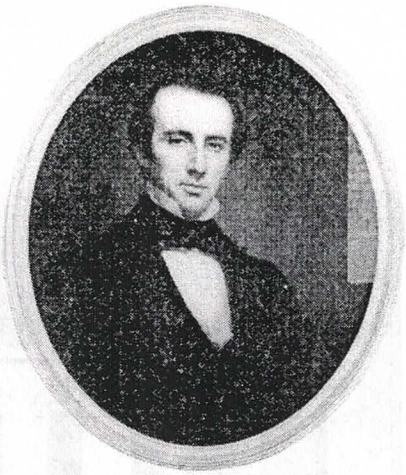
The architect of the Fremont Row House District was **Edward J. Burling (1819-1892)**, one of Chicago's early architects. He began his career at the age of 16 as an apprentice to a carpenter in his hometown of Newburgh, New York. He came to Chicago in 1843 with little formal training, but this was typical of the architects in the decade before and after the Fire of 1871. The city's early architects, according to *Architecture in Old Chicago,* "were for the most part builders attracted by the fame of the growing city, who came here as young men and climbed up from the carpenters's bench to the draughting table."

Burling's career was boosted in the early 1850s, when one of the city's most prominent developers. William B. Ogden, commissioned him to design a number of speculative houses. Other residential commissions came from such prominent entrepreneurs as lumber baron Eli Bates and banker Charles T. Yerkes.

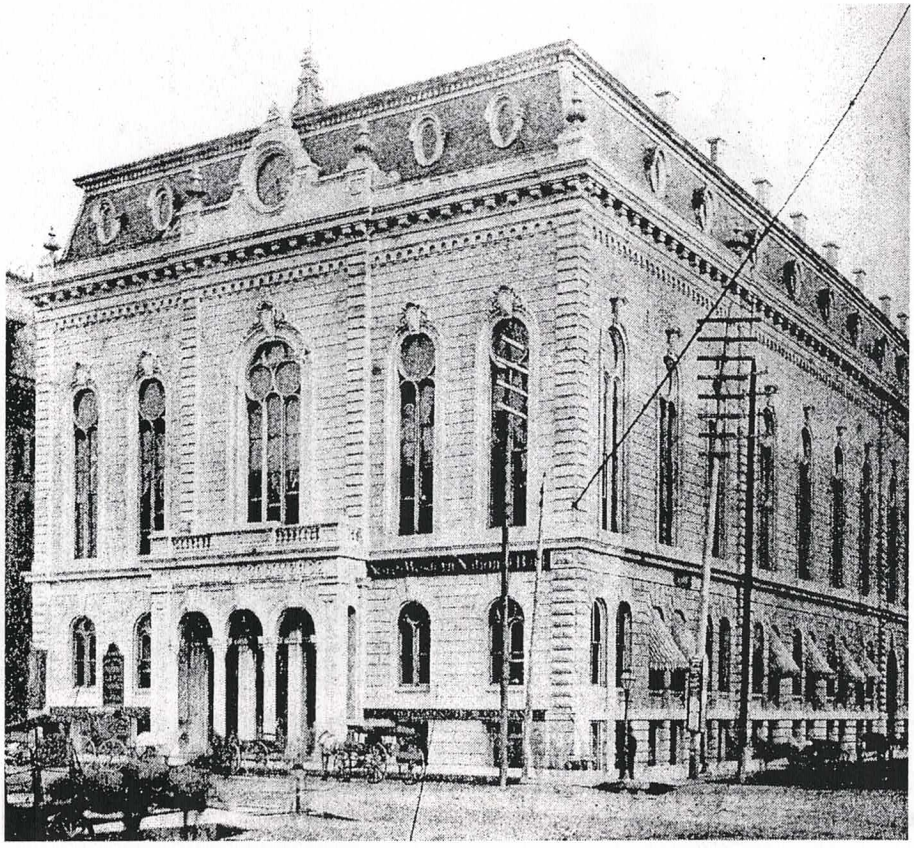
During the late-1850s and through the 1860s, Burling designed many of the city's most prominent buildings, including the First National Bank, the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce, Post Office, and the Tribune Building. Unfortunately, virtually all of Burling's early structures were demolished in the Fire of 1871.

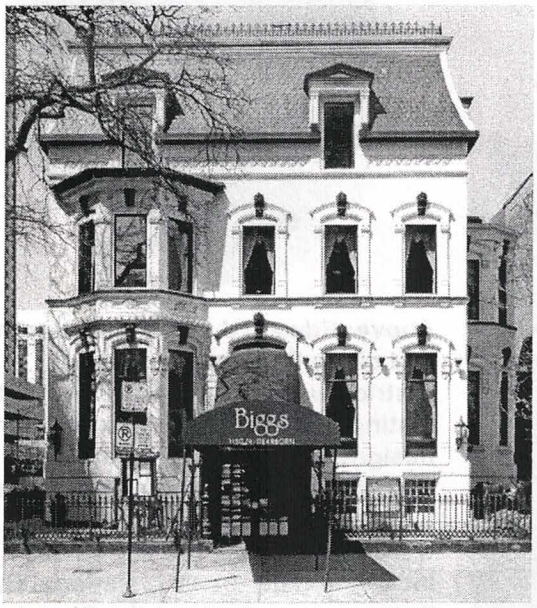
Working both alone and with partner Dankmar Adler, Burling played a leading role in the reconstruction and expansion of Chicago following the Fire. Among those buildings that remain are the Cole and White buildings in the Lake-Franklin Group, Unity Church (now the Scottish

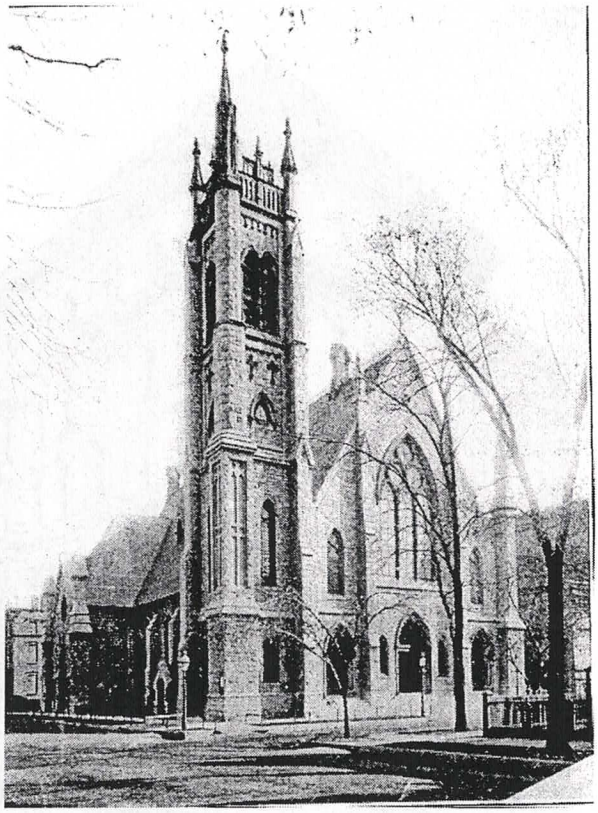


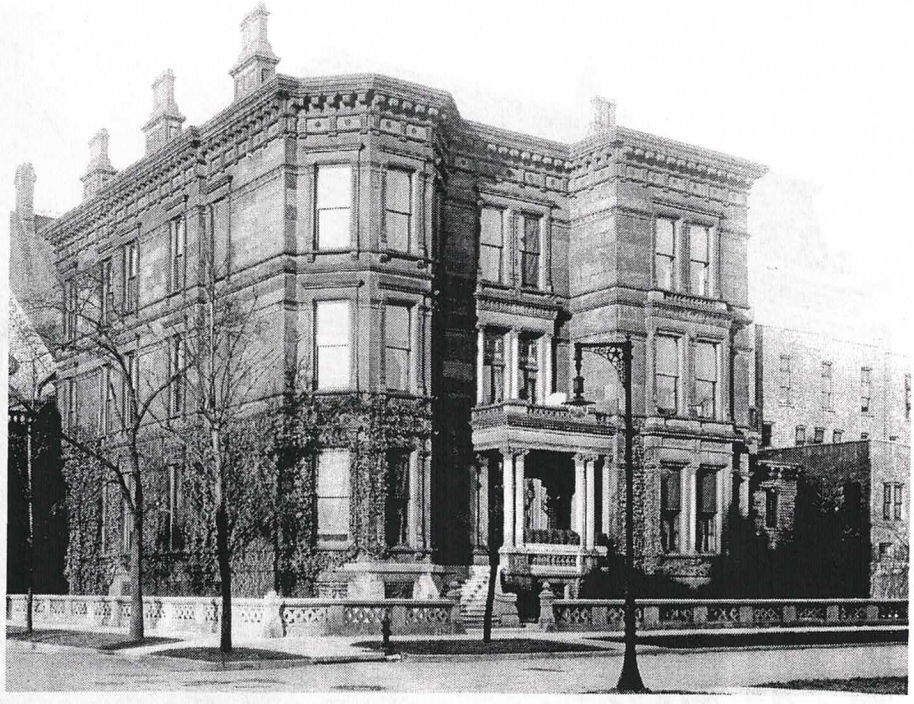


Above: Edward J. Burling, the architect of the Fremont Row House District, was one of Chicago's most distinguished early architects. Burling designed a number of prominent Chicago buildings in the 1850s, 60s, and early 70s, almost all of which were destroyed in the Fire of 1871, including (left) the First National Bank Building, and (bottom) the Chamber of Commerce Building.









Burling designed (top left) the DeKoven House (popularly known as Biggs Restaurant) at 1150 N. Dearborn St. (part of the Washington Square District Extension), (top right) St. James Cathedral at Wabash and Huron, and (above) the individually designated Chicago Landmark Nickerson House at 40 E. Erie.

Rite Cathedral) in the Washington Square District, the DeKoven House (designated as part of the Washington Square District Extension), and the Burling Row House District. During the 1880s, in partnership with Francis Whitehouse, Burling designed both the Samuel Nickerson House and the Church of the Epiphany.

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Fremont Row House District be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Fremont Row House District exemplifies the high-quality residential architecture constructed in Chicago's neighborhoods as the city rebuilt and expanded following the Fire of 1871. As such, these row houses constitute a rare, surviving group of "first-generation" row houses in Chicago, which were built in response to increasing land costs in many neighborhoods.

- The Fremont Row House District represents one of the earliest surviving groups of brick row houses built in Chicago in response to an 1874 city ordinance that required "fireproof" masonry construction in most of the city's neighborhoods.

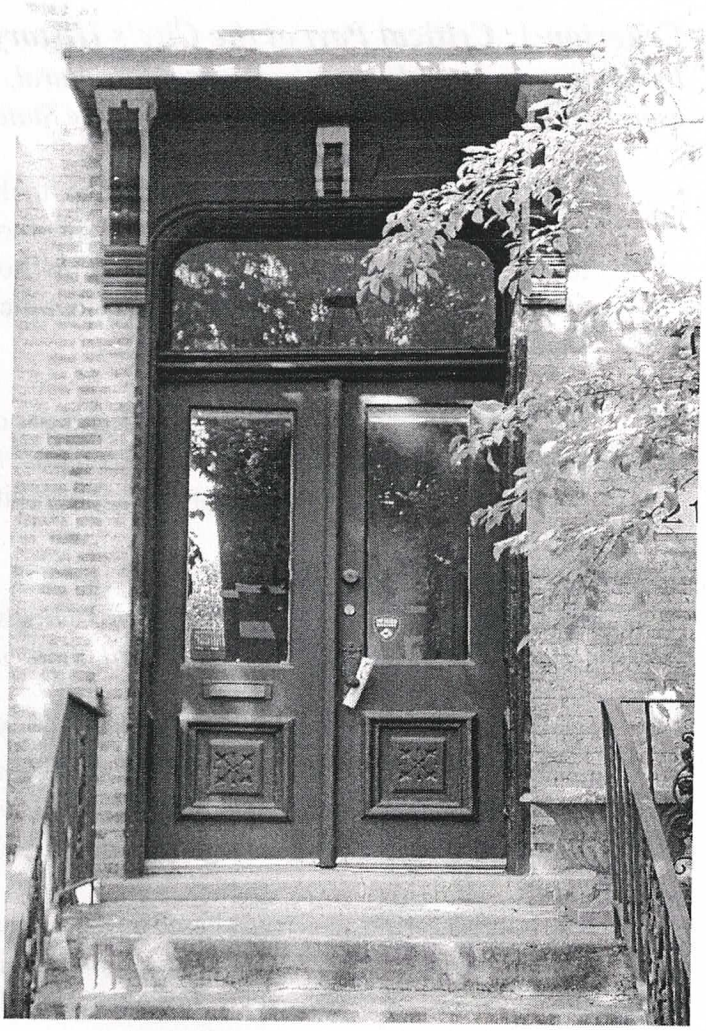
Criterion 4: Important Architecture

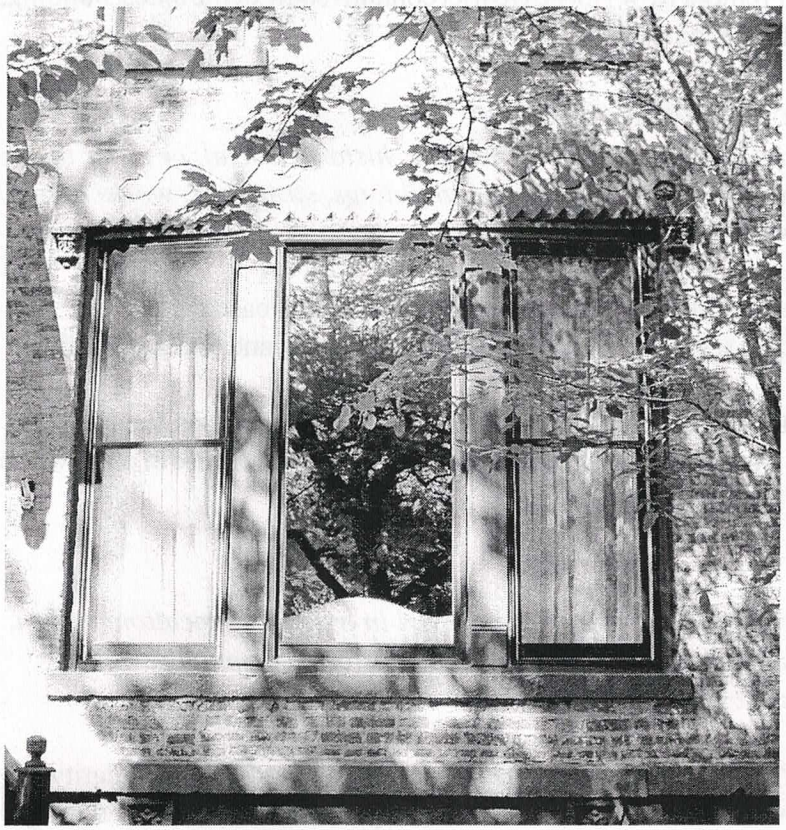
Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Fremont Row House District contains one of Chicago's finest remaining sets of Italianate-style row houses. Their overall form and details, including exceptional incised cast-stone window hoods and rare intact wooden cornices, exemplify the Italianate style as used in Chicago following the Fire of 1871.

- The Italianate style, which was based on the picturesque classically-inspired architecture of Italy, was one of the most popular architectural styles in Chicago during the 1860s through early 1880s. However, few examples of the style as it was used for row

The houses in the Fremont Row House District exhibit fine craftsmanship and detailing in a variety of materials. Right: Carved wooden doors at 2144 N. Fremont St. Above: A cast-stone lintel at 2106 N. Fremont St.





Above: A detail of the rare surviving wood cornice that ornaments the row houses in the district.

Left: This first-floor window at 2128 N. Fremont St., with its tripartite design and continuous stone lintel with Italianate-style incising, may be original or an early (late 1870s-early 1880s) alteration. A window with similar detailing is located at 2144 N. Fremont.

houses have survived. The Fremont Row House District is one of the largest and most intact groupings in the city.

- The Fremont Row House District has been widely recognized for its architectural quality. The *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* rated the row house group as "significant to the community." The buildings also were cited in the *AIA Guide to Chicago* and noted as "structures of special distinction" in the nomination form for the Sheffield Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Criterion 5: Significant Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The Fremont Row House District was designed by Edward J. Burling, one of Chicago's earliest architects. Beginning as a carpenter in 1843, Burling designed many of the city's most important buildings, including St. James Episcopal Cathedral, the first Chamber of Commerce Building, Unity Church, the DeKoven House, the row houses in the Burling Row House District, the Nickerson House, and the Church of the Epiphany.

- This row of buildings is a rare surviving example of Burling's residential designs. Most of his buildings were destroyed in the Chicago Fire of 1871 or lost to redevelopment. The Fremont Row House District contains some of the oldest buildings designed by Burling still standing.

Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District

Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.

- The Fremont Row House District displays a distinct visual unity based on a consistent scale, building setbacks, design, size, use of materials, and overall detailing.

- Through the unified Italianate-style design and detailing of its row houses, the Fremont Row House District creates a distinctive and recognizable sense of place within the larger Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

It is unusual to find a group of row houses in Chicago that combine age and overall integrity in the way that the Fremont Row House District does. Most groups of row houses built during

the 1870s have been demolished. It is even rarer to have such a group retain all of the individual houses that made up the original row.

In addition, a high percentage of the distinguishing features of these houses remain, such as raised entrances and elaborately carved stone window hoods. Quite exceptional in its rarity is the common wooden cornice running across the rooflines of all three groups of row houses. Most houses retain well-landscaped, open front yards surrounded by hedges or low metal fences. (One exception is 2124, which has a brick-and-wrought iron wall, added in the 1960s or 70s, that partially encloses its front yard.)

The most common exterior changes to the Fremont row houses are alterations to windows, doors, and porches. Windows were originally filled with one-over-one, double-hung sash. One row house (2100 N. Fremont) has replacement, single-pane windows that do not correspond to the original visual character of original windows. Two others, at 2110 and 2126, have tripartite windows that replace original pairs of first-floor windows. (The tripartite windows at 2128 and 2144 may be original or very early alterations due to their Italianate-style lintels.) Original double doors with upper windows and lower wood panels often have been replaced with single doors set within modified frames.

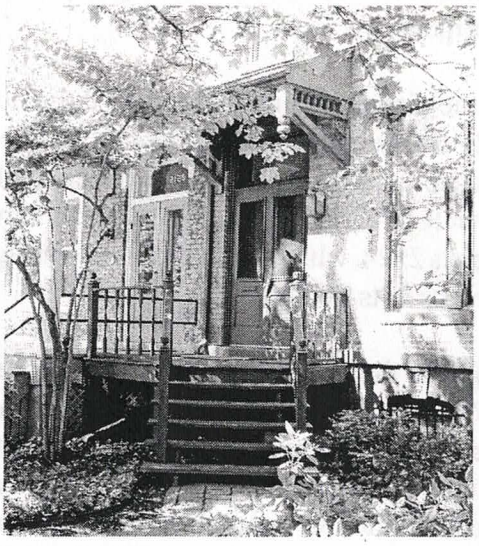
Existing porches vary somewhat in style and configuration. Some houses, including 2104 & 2106, retain original stoops with cast-iron railings flanking steps rising straight to front doors sheltered by wooden "pent" roofs supported by brackets. Several houses, including those at 2102, 2116, 2124, 2134, 2142, and 2144, retain similar stoop configurations, but have newer porch railings that replaced the original cast-iron railings. Others, including 2108, 2114, and 2128, have replacement stoops that have steps rising from one side rather than in front. Others (2136 and 2138) have replacement porches from the 1880s or 90s that retain stoop configurations similar to those originally found, but with more visually prominent porch roofs supported by Eastlake-style wooden spindlework. Others, including 2110, 2118, 2126, 2130 and 2132, have simple wooden porches from the early years of the 20th century, some with Classical-style posts.

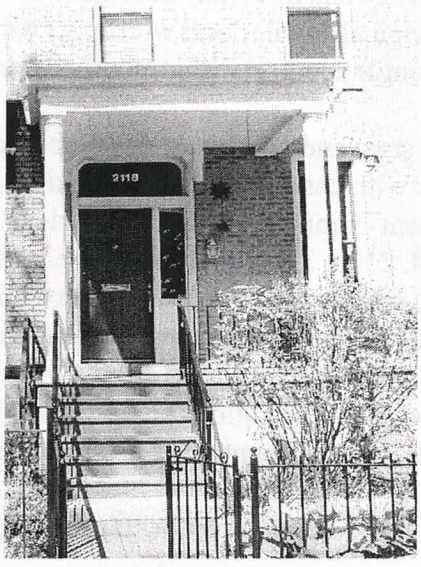
Significant Historical and Architectural Features

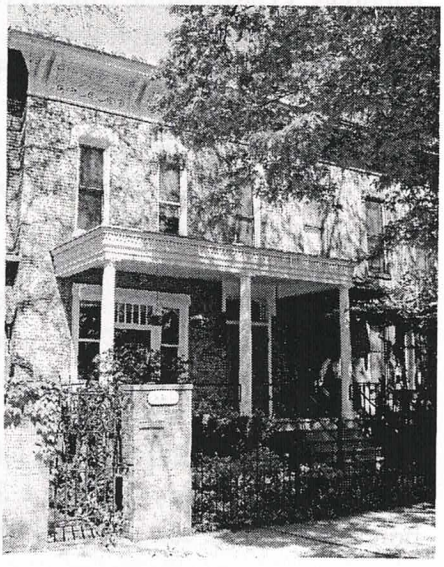
Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Fremont Row House District, the Commission recommends that the significant features of the district be identified as:

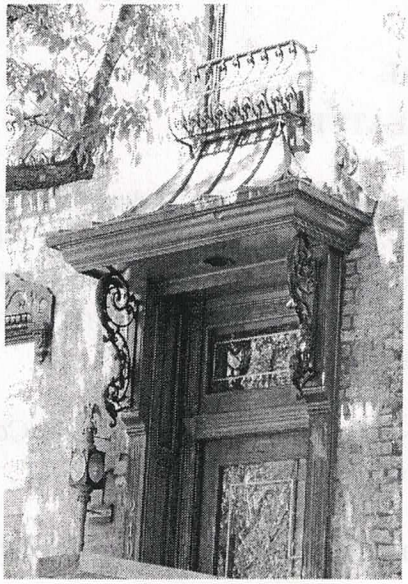
- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines, visible from public rights-of-way.

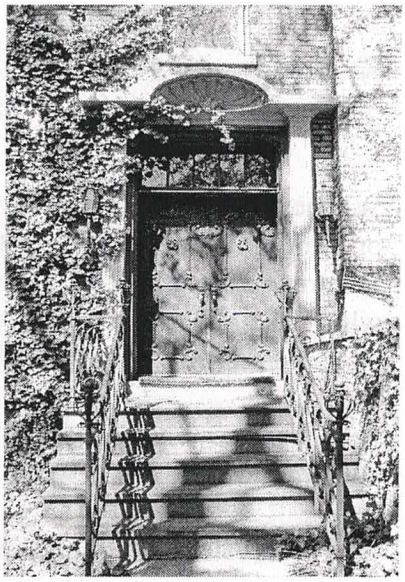






The most significant exterior alterations to houses in the Fremont Row House District involve porches. Examples of changes include (top left) the side-angled stairs at 2128, (top right) the Eastlake-style porch at 2138, (middle left and right) the Classical-style porches at 2118 and 2126, the Regency-style "pent" roof at 2100, and the Classical-style "scallop" detailand railings at 2124.





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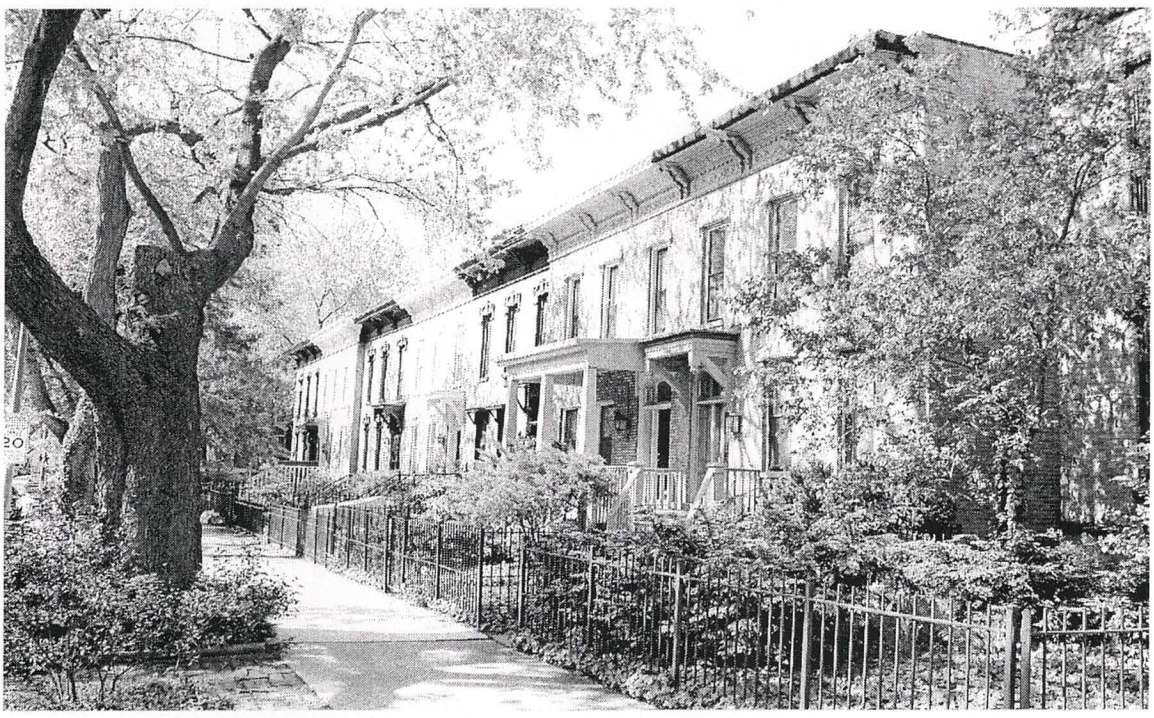

The district looking south from 2114 N. Fremont St.

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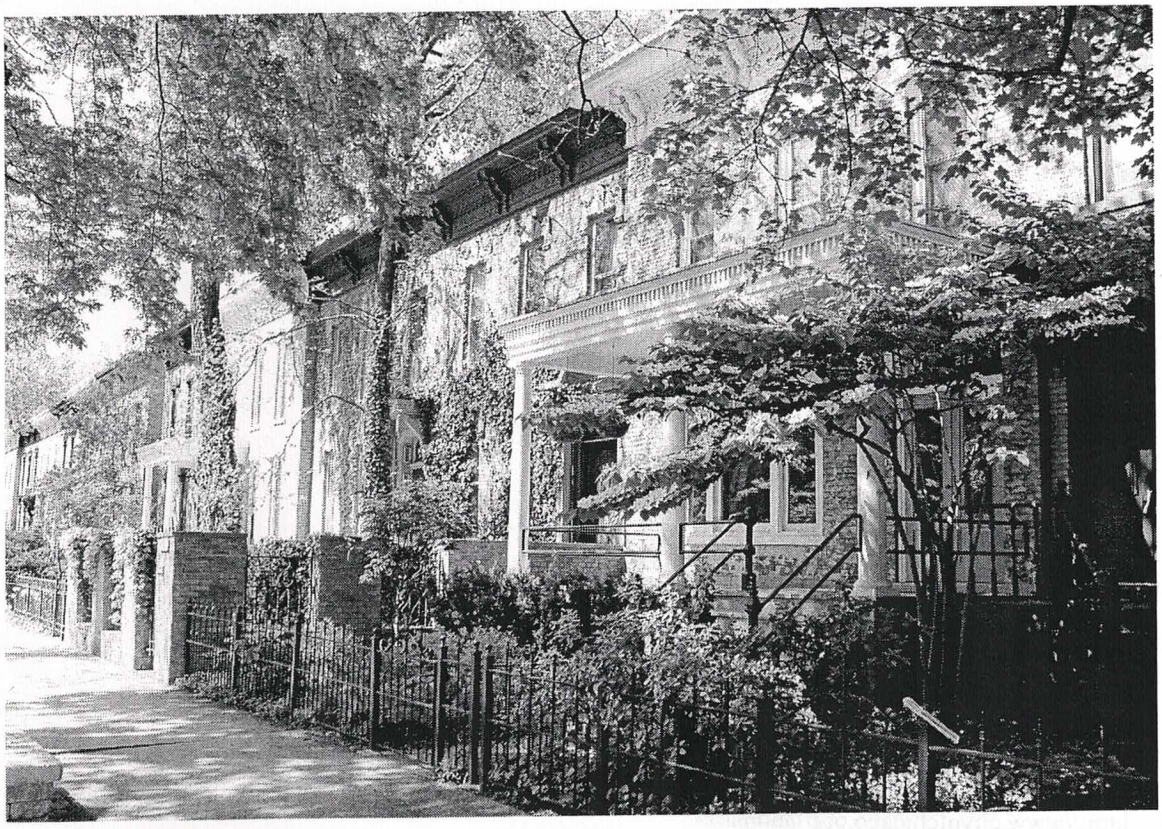
From Lowe, *Lost Chicago*: p. 7 (top, middle), 11 (top left, bottom).
Ron Gordon, for the Commission on Chicago Landmarks: p. 9, 12 (top left).
From Smith, *Mr. Burling of Burling Street*: p. 11 (top right).
From Gilbert and Bryson, *Chicago and its Makers*: p. 12 (top right).
Chicago Historical Society: p. 12 (bottom).



Two views of the Fremont Row House District.

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